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INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 0173  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY 0032  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1745  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY 0036  
RUCNCLS/SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 2211

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ASTANA 001415

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (M. O'MARA)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/24/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: RAKHAT ALIYEV,S THIRD STRIKE

REF: A. ASTANA 834

[1](#)B. ASTANA 1129

[1](#)C. ASTANA 1357

Classified By: Amb. John Ordway, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a bizarre turn of events, presidential son-in-law Rakhat Aliyev appears to have finally exhausted President Nazarbayev's patience with a series of rash public statements accusing Kazakhstani officials of criminal activity and criticizing the recent package of constitutional amendments. The Ministry of Interior announced on May 23 that a criminal case has been opened against Aliyev and two associates for the alleged kidnapping of two Nurbank officials in mid-January, one of whom remains missing after disappearing a second time in late January. In a clear sign that the gloves are off, Kazakhstani law enforcement officials have allowed one of the men to make his accusations public in a written statement and taped address broadcast on television. Foreign Minister Tazhin informed the Ambassador that Aliyev will give a press conference on May 24 in Vienna, and asked for U.S. restraint in reacting to what will undoubtedly be incendiary accusations. End summary.

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Aliyev Digs His Hole Deeper  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) Over the past week the scandal surrounding presidential son-in-law Rakhat Aliyev's alleged involvement in the January kidnapping of Nurbank officials (Refs A and B) has come to a head against the backdrop of intense public debate over constitutional reforms and presidential term limits. Aliyev, currently Kazakhstan's ambassador to Austria and the OSCE, has appeared desperate to deflect attention from the mounting allegations against him.

[1](#)3. (SBU) In a statement published in his Karavan newspaper on May 18, Aliyev accused Almaty mayor Imangali Tasmagambetov and Minister of Internal Affairs Baurzhan Mukhamedzhanov of conspiring against him and of being engaged in criminal fraud. Aliyev alleged that money stolen from Nurbank, where Tasmagambetov's nephew Abilmazhen Gilimov was chairman, had been used for land speculation in Almaty.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Following the announcement of the reform package which included a provision lifting term limits on President Nazarbayev (Ref C), Aliyev told the Financial Times that the decision to lift term limits "would not improve the republic's chances of winning the OSCE presidency." He added that "I fear that my many years of work on the campaign may

not bring success." In an apparent attempt to counterbalance her husband's comments, first daughter Dariga Nazarbayeva told Kazakhstan Today on May 22 that she had signed the proposal to lift constitutional term limits on Nazarbayev because "his historic mission is far from being accomplished," and "strong presidential power is the chief guarantee of stability and democratic development."

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Ministry of Internal Affairs Drops a Bombshell  
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15. (U) On May 23, the Ministry of Internal Affairs held a press conference in Astana to announce that a criminal case had been opened against Aliyev and his colleagues V. Koshlak and A. Bekbayev under Article 125.3 of the Criminal Code regarding the January 18-19 kidnapping of Nurbank officials Abilmazhen Gilimov and Zholdas Timraliyev. Ministry spokesman Bagdat Kozhakhmetov also announced that a separate case under Article 125.3 had been opened and arrest warrants had been issued for five other individuals suspected in the January 31 disappearance of Timraliyev and his associate Aidar Hasenov. Both men remain missing. Kozhakhmetov stated that three other individuals were already in custody in relation to other crimes discovered during the investigation, including theft and organized criminal activity.

16. (U) Kozhakhmetov announced during the press conference that President Nazarbayev had personally ordered the Procurator General and the Minister of Internal Affairs to carry out the investigation into the Nurbank affair "in the most careful manner, without regard to profession or position."

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And Allows Gilimov to Make Public His Allegations  
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17. (SBU) Gilimov's brother Samat Gilimov held a press conference in Almaty on May 23 to make public additional allegations against Rakhat Aliyev. He read from a two-page statement written by Abilmazhen Gilimov to the Medeo District Court judge hearing the case against him. (Note: Gilimov was arrested on February 14 by the Almaty Financial Police on charges of illegal entrepreneurship, abuse of power, and inciting a conflict between Almaty police and bank security. He is being detained during the trial. Many officers of the Financial Police are believed to be loyal to Aliyev, who headed the organization from 1997 to 1999. End note.)

18. (U) In the statement, which has been posted at [www.kub.kz](http://www.kub.kz), Gilimov claimed that he and Timraliyev were abducted by "Rakhat Aliyev and his people" on January 18-19. Gilimov claimed that Aliyev told the two men that they needed to go with him to Kiev on business, but instead took them to a building in Almaty where he handcuffed them, threatened them with a gun, and demanded shares of the businesses of all of their friends and family members who had received loans from Nurbank. Aliyev wanted the owner of the Ken Dala business center in Almaty, where Nurbank is headquartered and who had received a \$22 million loan from the bank, to transfer the property to him at no cost. Gilimov said that Timraliyev called the owner, Bolat Abdullayev, to convey the request.

19. (U) According to the statement, Gilimov managed to borrow a cell phone and call his wife to ask her to alert the authorities if he did not return home within an hour. After he told Aliyev that the police were on the way, Aliyev then agreed to pay \$34 million for the Ken Dala building, and "promised not to harass us further if we remain silent." Aliyev then released Gilimov and Timraliyev, only to fire them from Nurbank on January 22 and again demand title to the Ken Dala building for free. At that point, Gilimov signed a

resignation letter and documents transferring his 8% share in Nurbank to Aliyev's family. Gilimov stated that he last heard from Timraliyev on January 31 when his former colleague called him to say that he had been summoned to Nurbank on business.

¶10. (SBU) The same evening as the press conference, Astana TV (owned by the "other" presidential son-in-law Timur Kulibayev) aired a ninety-minute tape of Gilimov detailing his allegations against Aliyev. Gilimov did not say what day he made the recording, but it was apparently made while he was in detention. AlmaTV, owned by Aliyev and Nazarbayeva, began to broadcast the tape but quickly interrupted the transmission.

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Foreign Minister to Ambassador  
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¶11. (C) Foreign Minister Tazhin summoned the Ambassador for an urgent meeting on May 24 to warn that Aliyev would hold a press conference that day in Vienna, where he was expected to "sling a lot of mud" at the Kazakhstani government and the reform process. Tazhin asked that the U.S. be restrained in its reaction to Aliyev's comments. He described President Nazarbayev's decision to publicly order the law enforcement authorities to investigate the case thoroughly and objectively as a clear sign of the importance Nazarbayev attaches to reforming the system and rooting out corruption.

¶12. (C) Tazhin informed the Ambassador that Aliyev could not be stripped of his ambassadorial position until President Nazarbayev had made such a decision - which he (Tazhin) expected shortly. In the meantime, he felt himself in an awkward situation with an ambassador in Vienna who was publicly criticizing the President and now under criminal charges. Tazhin noted that while the President had been dealing with this behind the scenes, he had been actively engaged with the UNESCAP ministerial session in Almaty on May 21. Tazhin, who was seated with Nazarbayev at the head table with a gaggle of UN Under Secretaries General, said it was remarkable that the President displayed no signs of strain - actively participating in the conversation and engaging in extensive repartee with the other guests at his table. The Ambassador, who was also present at the dinner, found

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Nazarbayev to be in an excellent mood as well.

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Comment: Three Strikes and He's Out  
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¶13. (C) This is (at least) the third time that Aliyev's outrageous behavior has driven Nazarbayev to take drastic action. In 2001 Aliyev was sent to "honorable exile" in Vienna for the first time after allegedly plotting to seize power. Following Aliyev and Nazarbayeva's intense criticism of the government in the wake of the February 2006 murder of opposition leader Altynbek Sarsenbaiuly, Aliyev was stripped of his post as Deputy Foreign Minister and sent back to Vienna, and Nazarbayeva's Asar party was folded into Otan. Given Aliyev's increasingly irrational behavior and his unprecedented public airing of grievances, which has shocked all levels of Kazakhstani society, this may well be the end of his public life in Kazakhstan. Tazhin noted to the Ambassador that the public will be overwhelmingly with the President on this issue; we agree with his prediction. Moreover, even if Nazarbayev made this move only under extreme provocation, it will cast a serious, and perhaps long-lasting, chill on the actions of other relatives and associates who have long behaved with complete impunity in business and their personal lives. When combined with the lifting of term limits, Nazarbayev's public rebuke of Aliyev should eliminate for the foreseeable future the unseemly maneuvering among the family and other elites to position

themselves for a succession struggle.  
ORDWAY